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ABSTRACT

Some of the problems involved in the use of intelligence and achievement tests with bicultural students are discussed. Some tests are "fair" to bicultural groups. The Arthur Performance Scale and the Goodenough Draw-A-Man-Test are fair to certain Hopi and Navajo Indian Groups. The use of these tests has been limited because they have not correlated highly with the academic achievement of these groups. The following guidelines are given for the testing of the intelligence of bicultural children: (1) it is unrealistic to expect an intelligence test to be magically "fair" to all cultures and accurately predict behavior when the values affecting the definition of intelligent behavior vary drastically; (2) tests which may be "fair" for one bicultural group may not correlate with achievement and hence be of limited value to educators; (3) intelligence tests should not be given to bicultural students simply because it is routinely given to the other students; (4) individual tests should be given when feasible so that test-taking behavior may be better controlled; (5) a test which separates verbal and non-verbal scores may be more descriptive of the relative ability of upper grade bicultural students; (6) test results for bicultural students should be used with a great deal of reservation by people who are familiar with testing bicultural students; and (7) it is imperative that other sources of information be used in conjunction with read test scores. Achievement tests can be used as a measure of bicultural children's success in school, with reservations relating to language and cultural factors. (DE)

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THE TESTING OF BICULTURAL CHILDREN

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THE TESTING OF BICULTURAL CHILDREN

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A great deal of concern over the use of standardized tests with bicultural students is usually shown by educators in schools having a high bicultural population. This concern is well founded in that from a technical standpoint the reliability, validity and norming of standardized tests have been established for the general population rather than for a particular bicultural group. The establishment of local norms does not entirely solve the problem in that reliability and validity are still uncontrolled and the spread of scores may be too little to differentiate among the students. The use of intelligence and achievement tests with bicultural students is discussed below to explore some of the problems involved.

Intelligence Tests

The major purpose of intelligence testing in schools is to obtain a measure of "native" ability so that the appropriateness of a student's progress may be evaluated. While it is generally accepted that the people of all cultures have the same native intelligence, many cultures do very poorly on intelligence tests. To facilitate the testing of these groups, some tests that are purported to be "culturally fair" have been constructed.

A review of these tests reveal, however, that one or more of the following assumptions were accepted in the construction of these tests.

1. A definition of intelligent behavior based upon our cultural values is applicable to all cultures.
2. Tasks that are non-verbal in nature are automatically "fair" for all cultural groups.

3. Tests that are "fair" with one bicultural group are automatically fair for all cultures.

4. The same type of test-taking motivation may be assumed for all cultures.

Research that would substantiate any of the assumptions listed above is lacking and, in fact, the following hypotheses are indicated:

1. Intelligent behavior is defined differently by various cultures. While our culture stresses speed, competitiveness, aggressiveness, and mastery over nature, other cultures may stress cooperativeness, timelessness, and acceptance of nature as it exists as intelligent behavior.

2. Cultures vary in the degree to which they stress non-verbal behaviors. Children from some cultures are just as handicapped in the manipulation of numbers and geometric designs when they enter school as they may be in verbal activities. While ability in non-verbal tasks may progress more rapidly than ability in verbal tasks, non-verbal tasks which the culture does not stress will continue to be difficult for bicultural students.

3. Several tests that are fair for one bicultural group are not fair to other bicultural groups since bicultural groups vary tremendously.

4. Many bicultural groups do not reward the competitive behavior necessary for success in many intelligence tests.

Some tests are "fair" to bicultural groups. The Arthur Performance Scale and the Goodenough Draw-A-Man Test, for example, are fair to certain Hopi and Navajo Indian groups. The use of these tests by educators has been limited because these tests have not correlated highly with the academic achievement of these groups. If the hypotheses listed above are correct, it is logical to expect that tests that are "fair" for a bicultural with divergent values would not necessarily correlate highly with academic achievement in our schools.

The Arthur Performance Scale mentioned above has had limited use because it is an individual test that requires a tester trained in individual mental testing. A limited number of studies involving this test and the WISC indicates that while they

are not fair to all cultures, many bicultural groups scored quite well on these individual tests. It may be hypothesized that the higher scores may be because the tester is able to better control test-taking behavior in individual situations.

On the basis of the rationale that has been presented, the following guide lines are presented for testing the intelligence of bicultural children:

1. It is unrealistic to expect an intelligence test to be magically "fair" to all cultures and accurately predict behavior when the values affecting the definition of intelligent behavior vary drastically.

2. Tests which may be "fair" for one bicultural group may not correlate with achievement and hence be of limited value to educators.

3. Intelligence tests should not be given to bicultural students simply because it is routinely given to the other students. This practice may result in bicultural students erroneously being labeled as "slow learners." The testing of biculturals should have a definite purpose and carefully selected tests should be given.

4. Individual tests should be given when feasible so that test-taking behavior may be better controlled.

5. A test which separates verbal and non-verbal scores may be more descriptive of the relative ability of upper grade bicultural students.

6. Test results for bicultural students should be used with a great deal of reservation by people who are familiar with testing bicultural students.

7. It is imperative that other sources of information such as teacher opinions, grades, anecdotal records, and work samples be used in conjunction with test scores if test scores are to be read.

Achievement Tests

The major purpose of achievement testing in schools is to objectively test the degree to which students have learned the skills and knowledge that the school has attempted to impart. Since most bicultural students will need to compete educationally and vocationally in our society, it is logical that they take achievement tests to determine the degree to which they succeed in learning these skills and knowledge.

However, it should be firmly remembered that for most of these students this is a test in a foreign language concerning a foreign culture. One should also remember that test taking motivation is not controlled and the same problems of reliability, validity and norm groups for the dominant population only, exist.

With these reservations in mind, the results of achievement tests for bicultural students can be used as a measure of their success in our schools. Other measures should be used in conjunction with achievement scores and usually the results may be viewed as a minimum measure of achievement, with the maximum achievement an unknown.

Conclusions

Many technical and practical problems involved in testing bicultural students are reviewed in this paper. Because of these problems, the obvious conclusion reached is that if bicultural students are to be tested with standardized tests, it should be done by trained persons cognizant of the many limitations of these tests for bicultural students. Indiscriminate testing may result in the inaccurate labeling of an individual child and could conceivably outweigh the benefits derived from a testing program.

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